

# The Attachment Nest: Interdisciplinary Understanding of Attachment and Human Development Across the Spectrum of (A)typical functioning.

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**SYLLABUS**

**VU Amsterdam Summer School**

**22 July – 2 August 2024**

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Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact [amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl](mailto:amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl).

## Course Details

Title	The Attachment Nest: Interdisciplinary Understanding of Attachment and Human Development Across the Spectrum of (A)typical Functioning
Coordinator(s)	Dr. Stefania Vacaru ( <i>VU Amsterdam, NL, NYU Abu Dhabi, UAE</i> ) Prof. dr. Paula Sterkenburg ( <i>VU Amsterdam; Bartimeus, NL</i> )
Other lecturers	Dr. Pascal Vrticka ( <i>University of Essex, UK</i> ) Dr. Or Dagan ( <i>Long Island University, USA</i> ) Prof. Theodore Waters ( <i>NYU Abu Dhabi, UAE; NYU USA</i> ) Dr. Rui Yang ( <i>NYUAD, UAE</i> ) Ahmed Riaz Mohamed, Ma ( <i>VU Amsterdam, NL; North-West University, SA</i> ) Dr. Sien Vandesande ( <i>KU Leuven, BE</i> ) Dr. Anne Tharner ( <i>VU Amsterdam, NL</i> ) Dr. Thomas Bergmann ( <i>KEH, GE; EAMHID</i> ) Dr. Silke Reimer ( <i>Caritas, St. Elisabeth-Haus Lichtenrade, GE</i> ) Dr. Margaret Adabbo ( <i>Cattolica University, IT</i> ) Nina Bruinhof, Msc ( <i>RadboudUMC, NL</i> ) Aicha Mazrina, Bsc ( <i>UVA, NL</i> )
Study credits	3
Form(s) of tuition	On campus, field excursions
Approximate contact hours	44
Approximate self-study hours	40

## Course description

This summer school course, hosted by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, provides international students with an integrative and inclusive exploration of human attachment development and its multifaceted role across various settings. Renowned scholars from diverse international backgrounds will present insights gleaned from theoretical, experimental, and clinical perspectives, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the profound impact of early caregiving experiences on individuals' socioemotional and cognitive development throughout the lifespan. Rooted in the seminal attachment theory by Bowlby (1969), the course will present the scientific endeavors of researchers from different disciplines to unravel the intricate neurobiological, cognitive, and social mechanisms shaping human development. The attachment theory posits that infants construct internal working models (IWMs; Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000), which act as rudimentary cognitive templates for future interactions, shaping expectations about the self, others, and relationships. In this course, we will trace the development and the expansion of the theory across different disciplines and learn about its applications in understanding typical and atypical development in a cross-cultural framework.

The course unfolds through three interwoven quests:

- 1) Attachment Formation and Development: Explore the contextual nuances of attachment in the context of parenting and dyadic/triadic interactions.
- 2) Cross-Cultural Considerations and Assessment: Explore the assessment of attachment at different developmental stages and across diverse cultures, emphasizing the cross-cultural validity of the theory.
- 3) Implications and Applications of Attachment Theory: Investigate attachment-based interventions, particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and explore the integration of technology to support implementation and delivery.

### Learning objectives

- 1) Comprehensive Understanding: Develop an in-depth understanding of how attachment forms and its pivotal role in subsequent socioemotional and cognitive development through theoretical and empirical insights.
- 2) Assessment Competence: Develop an in-depth understanding of diverse assessment instruments for attachment from infancy to adulthood, fostering informed decision-making.
- 3) Caregiving in the Context of Disability: Explore caregiving dynamics within the context of disability, including adaptations of assessment instruments and technology-supported attachment-based interventions.

Thanks to our interdisciplinary, international collaborations with clinicians and researchers, students will:

- Network with experts in the field of attachment and development.
- Engage in thought-provoking group discussions and debates encouraging critical thinking about attachment theory and its clinical applications.
- Enrich their learning experience through lectures by renowned scholars in the field.
- Showcase their own project, provide, receive feedback, and collaborate with peers.
- Acquire a global perspective on human attachment development.

### Assignments

Throughout the course, students will be tasked with identifying a key question related to attachment theory that aligns with their interests, background, and ongoing projects. They will

produce a concise research paper (1000 words) on a theme of their choice within the course's main themes.

On the final day of the course, students will present their work (5 min).

### Grading

The research papers will receive a numerical grade on a scale of 1-10, with 5.5 being the minimum passing grade. Pitch presentations, however, will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. To receive accreditation for the course, both assignments must meet the required standards.

Attendance is mandatory for a minimum of 80% of the course.

THE STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO PRESENT A POSTER DURING THE SUMMER SCHOOL (i.e., project they are working on, thesis, pre-registration). A title should be submitted prior to the beginning of the course to [v.s.vacaru@vu.nl](mailto:v.s.vacaru@vu.nl).

### Course Schedule

	<b>Block 1</b>	<b>Block 2</b>	<b>Block 3</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>22.07</b> 10-11:30 Welcome and Intro	12-13 Get to know lunch	13-14:30 Prof. Waters & Dr. Yang
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>23.07</b> 9-10:30 Dr. Tharner	11-12:30 Dr. Vrticka	14-15:30 Dr. Dagan
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>24.07</b> 9-10:30 Dr. Vacaru	11-12 Q & A individual project	
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>25.07</b> 9-10:30 Dr. Addabbo	14-15:30 Poster presentations	
<b>Friday</b>	<b>26.07</b> Excursion 1: Ons Tweede Thuis (see program below)		
<b>Monday</b>	<b>29.07</b> 9-10:30 Bruinhof, Msc	11-12:30 Poster presentations	
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>30.07</b> 9-10:30 Prof. Sterkenburg	11-12:30 supervised expert groups	14-15:30 Riaz Mohammed, Ma
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>31.07</b> 9-10:30 Dr. Vandesande	11-12:30 Dr. Reimer	14-15:30 Dr. Bergmann
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>01.08</b> Excursion 2: Bartimeus (see program below)		
<b>Friday</b>	<b>02.08</b> 10-13 Pitch presentations	12-14:30 Lunch and Conclusion	

**Prof. Theo Waters & Dr. Rui Yang** <https://www.waterslab-psych-nyuad.com/>

Title: A Secure Base Script Perspective on Attachment Representations: Evidence Across Development and Culture

Abstract: Attachment theory posits that early (in)sensitive caregiving experiences lead to the development of a mental representation of relationships, or an internal working model (IWM), which is then carried forward across development as the prototype for all future relationships, including friendship and romantic relationships. However, the assessment of attachment representations has been criticized as being too vague and over-generalized. In an effort to specify the internal working model, Waters, and Waters (2006) proposed that attachment representations take the form of a cognitive script and that this “secure base script” serves as the cognitive mechanism by which early caregiving experiences inform later relationships. Growing evidence suggests that attachment representations contain, in part, a cognitive script detailing the basic sequence of events associated with supportive care during distress (Waters & Roisman, 2019) and play a mechanistic role in shaping attachment behavior/relationship functioning. In this talk, Dr. Waters will first present research that illustrates the secure base script, its assessment, and its antecedents and consequences in Western contexts. Following this, Dr. Yang will present cross-cultural adaptations and applications of the secure base script approach for understanding attachment in non-Western contexts.

**Short bio:** Prof. Waters received his Ph.D. from Emory University in Cognitive and Developmental Psychology. He was then awarded a post-doctoral National Research Service Award (NRSA) to conduct research at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development. His research focuses on the developmental and cognitive mechanisms that account for the enduring effects of early experience across the lifespan. He integrates traditional narrative, developmental, and cognitive methodologies to advance our knowledge of how representations of early experience form, develop and interact with the social environment to influence critical developmental processes.

Dr. Yang obtained her Ph.D. from the Developmental Psychology program at New York University. Her research focuses on understanding parenting and children's gender development in the Chinese context. She has been the coordinator of a multi-cohort 10-year longitudinal study with over 1,100 families in Nanjing, China.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Nivison, M. D., Dagan, O., Booth-LaForce, C., Roisman, G. I., & Waters, T. E. (2023). Caregiving antecedents of secure base script knowledge inferred from the Adult Attachment Interview: A comparative, pre-registered analysis. *Infant and Child Development*, e2410.
- Waters, H. S., Waters, T. E., Waters, E., Thompson, R. A., Simpson, J. A., & Berlin, L. J. (2021). From internal working models to script-like attachment representations. *Attachment: The fundamental questions*, 111-119.
- Waters, T. E., Yang, R., Finet, C., Verhees, M. W., & Bosmans, G. (2022). An empirical test of prototype and revisionist models of attachment stability and change from middle childhood to adolescence: A 6-year longitudinal study. *Child development*, 93(1), 225-236.

**Dr. Anne Tharner** <https://research.vu.nl/en/persons/anne-tharner>

Title: Lost in translation? A guide to attachment terminology.

Abstract: Part of the appeal of attachment language is that it feels near to our everyday experience. Terms like ‘attachment’, ‘security’, ‘sensitivity’, or ‘disorganization’ feel readily recognizable. Yet not one of these terms is used by academic attachment researchers in line with ordinary language. Attachment theory has evolved over time, and multiple versions have emerged that use similar terms, which are held by communities that assume that they are referring to the same thing and with little infrastructure to help them discover otherwise.

This has hindered both attachment research and the evidence-based use of attachment in practice. Synthesis of research findings is hindered if the same terms imply different things. Similarly, clinicians incorporating attachment theory in their therapeutic practices may get tripped up or misled by the different meanings attributed to attachment-related words by researchers compared to their own connotations.

Greater clarity about attachment terminology is a critical basis for successful dialogue between researchers and applied professionals, where they can understand and learn from one another. In this talk, I would like to introduce a guide to attachment terminology used by the academic community, which has recently been published on the Society for Emotion and Attachment Studies website. I will briefly describe the background of this guide, the aims, and how the guide can be used.

### **Reading recommendations:**

Editorial Perspective: On the need for clarity about attachment terminology - Verhage - Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry - Wiley Online Library

*Or in Dutch:* Lost in translation? Het belang van meer duidelijkheid bij het gebruik van kernbegrippen uit de gehechtheidstheorie in wetenschap en praktijk | Amsterdam University Press Journals Online ([aup-online.com](http://aup-online.com))

Madigan, S., Fearon, R. M., van IJzendoorn, M. H., Duschinsky, R., Schuengel, C., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., ... & Verhage, M. L. (2023). The first 20,000 strange situation procedures: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 149(1-2), 99.

Duschinsky, R., Bakkum, L., Mannes, J. M., Skinner, G. C., Turner, M., Mann, A., ... & Beckwith, H. (2021). Six attachment discourses: Convergence, divergence and relay. *Attachment & Human Development*, 23(4), 355-374. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2021.1918448>

**Dr. Pascal Vrticka** <https://pvticka.com/attachment/>

Title: Charting the Social Neuroscience of Human Attachment (SoNeAt)

Abstract: Since the seminal work by Spangler and Grossmann (1993) who for the first time assessed physiology (heart rate) and endocrinology (salivary cortisol) in association with behavioural observation of attachment during the Strange Situation in children, our understanding of the neurobiology underlying human attachment has been steadily growing. In my talk, I will summarise the state-of-the art of the social neuroscience of human attachment (SoNeAt) by introducing our functional neuro-anatomical models of organised and disrupted/disorganised attachment (NAMA and NAMDA) and explaining the strong link between attachment and co-regulation through social allostasis. Based on these insights derived from SoNeAt, I will subsequently not only show how adaptive and meaningful all attachment patterns are but also what kind of risk factors for wellbeing and health they may entail. I will close with some thoughts about potential future prevention and intervention strategies based on SoNeAt.

**Short Bio:** Dr Pascal Vrticka is a social neuroscientist and Associate Professor in Psychology (University of Essex, UK). He is pioneering a new area of research investigating the social neuroscience of human attachment ([SoNeAt](#)). This includes the description of the first functional neuroanatomical models of human attachment, both organised (i.e., secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-anxious; NAMA) and disrupted/disorganised (NAMDA). As an Associate Member of the Executive Board of the Society for Emotion and Attachment Studies (SEAS) and Coordinating Board President of the Special Interest Research Group on the Social Neuroscience of Human Attachment ([SIRG SoNeAt](#)) within SEAS, Dr Vrticka furthermore actively works towards clarifying current misconceptions and widespread confusion about attachment theory and research - see, for example, his Attachment Q & A, Attachment Science and Attachment Myth-Busting series.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Vrticka, P. (2021, October). Towards a social neuroscience of human attachment. in *psychophysiology* (Vol. 58, pp. S16-S16). 111 RIVER ST, HOBOKEN 07030-5774, NJ USA: WILEY.
- White, L., Kungl, M., & Vrticka, P. (2023). Charting the social neuroscience of human attachment (SoNeAt). *Attachment & Human Development*, 25(1), 1-18.



**Dr. Or Dagan** <http://www.ordagan.com/about.html>

**Title:** Attachment Networks to Multiple Caregivers: What Do We Know, and Where Should We Go from here?

**Abstract:** Despite early calls to assess children's development through the lenses of simultaneous and independent attachment relationships (van IJzendoorn & Tavecchio et al., 1987; van IJzendoorn et al., 1992), attachment research has predominantly focused on mother–child relationships, deeming other caretakers, at best, as subsidiary attachment figures. Recently, the notion of attachment networks and the predictive validity of socioemotional outcomes was revived (Dagan & Sagi-Schwartz, 2018), and new publications on the predictive power of attachment to mothers and fathers on developmental outcomes came out (e.g., Brown et al., 2022; Iwanski et al., 2021; Kuo et al., 2019; Volling et al., 2023). In addition, a series of Individual Participant Data meta-analyses on the temperamental antecedents and socioemotional sequelae of attachment networks to mothers and fathers were published (the Collaboration on Attachment to Multiple Parents and Outcomes Synthesis, 2022; 2023; 2024). Together, findings have strengthened the notion that research on attachment networks is useful in assessing developmental outcomes, and that attachment researchers should redirect their focus to an attachment networks research framework. In this lecture, I will present (a) the history and development of attachment networks research, (b) the models that were recently proposed to assess such networks, (c) the most up-to-date empirical findings based on three recent meta-analyses, and (d) open questions that we encourage future research to address.

**Short bio:** Dr. Dagan is a professor of Clinical Psychology at Long Island University, and a Permanent Visiting professor at the Department of Psychology, Universidad del Desarrollo, Santiago, Chile. He is also a New York State licensed clinical psychologist.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Dagan, O., & Sagi-Schwartz, A. (2021). Early attachment networks to multiple caregivers: History, assessment models, and future research recommendations. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2021, 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20446>
- Dagan, O., Schuengel, C., Verhage, M. L., Madigan, S., Roisman, G. I., Bernard, K., Duschinsky, R., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M., Bureau, J.-F., Sagi-Schwartz, A., Eiden, R. D., Wong, M. S., Brown, G. L., Soares, I., Oosterman, M., Fearon, R. M. P., Steele, H., Martins, C., Aviezer, O., & (2024). Configurations of mother–child and father–child attachment relationships as predictors of child language competence: An individual participant data meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 95, 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13998>

**Dr. Stefania Vacaru** <https://www.waterslab-psych-nyuad.com/>

**Title:** The cradle of Human Development: The role of early parent-child interactions

**Abstract:** In this lecture, we will explore the fundamental psychophysiological mechanisms that contribute to healthy development and emphasize the importance of early experiences in shaping individuals' social and emotional development. Early parent-infant interactions form the foundation for healthy developmental outcomes and long-lasting attachment styles. These secure relationships are based on contingent, mutually responsive exchanges, such as vocalizations and gaze, and parents' sensitivity and attunement to their infants' signals. We will focus on the emergence and modulation of socioemotional outcomes from infancy throughout childhood and adolescence within children-caregivers interactions. This context provides the framework within which individuals learn about themselves and the world, form a self-image, and, most importantly, learn to regulate stress. This lecture will present research investigating the influence of early relationships on child development and the underlying mechanisms from three angles: clinical, experimental, and biological. First, we will discuss the constellation of parent-infant behaviors, such as imitation, to achieve attuned interactions and the role of parental sensitivity in typical and atypical development, including visual impairments.

**Short bio:** Stefania is a postdoctoral fellow at the NYU Abu Dhabi, UAE and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, NL. She has a background in clinical, experimental, cognitive and psychobiological development. Her work aims to further our understanding of the attachment theory from a stress regulation perspective, guiding socioemotional and behavioral strategies in parenting or in interpersonal interactions.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Vacaru, S. V., Parenteau, A. M., Yi, S., Silvers, J. A., Hostinar, C. E., & de Weerth, C. (2023). Adolescents' hair cortisol concentrations during COVID-19: Evidence from two longitudinal studies in the Netherlands and the United States. *Developmental Psychobiology*, 65(8), e22438.
- Vacaru, S. V., Brett, B. E., Eckermann, H., & de Weerth, C. (2023). Determinants of maternal breast milk cortisol increase: Examining dispositional and situational factors. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 158, 106385.
- Vacaru, S. V., Van Schaik, J. E., De Water, E., & Hunnius, S. (2020). Five-year-olds' facial mimicry following social ostracism is modulated by attachment security. *Plos one*, 15(12), e0240680.

**Dr. Margaret Addabbo**

<https://docenti.unicatt.it/ppd2/en/docenti/99046/margaret-addabbo/profilo>

**Title:** Staying in touch: Unraveling the role of touch in early human development

**Abstract:** In 1980, Bowlby proposed that physical contact with an attachment figure provides a tangible indication of safety. Surprisingly, the role of touch in infants' socio-emotional development has been a neglected topic for many years. Only recently, a growing body of literature showed that touch is indeed a core component of early social interactions. In this lecture, I will focus on the sense of touch and its unique role in caregiver–infant interactions and in child development more broadly. I will provide a review showing the cascading effects that early affective tactile experiences have on different domains of human development. I will start presenting some evidence showing the regulatory effects of touch on infants' behavior. Indeed, touch influences the autonomic system acting as a stress buffer and mediates the release of oxytocin supporting, in turn, affiliative behaviors and parent-child bonding. Thanks to its regulatory functions, affective tactile experiences have also cascading effects on brain development, cognitive functions, and attentional attunement to environmental social, and non-social stimuli. Lastly, I will discuss the need to include touch as a fundamental measure to study human attachment and intervention paradigms.

**Short bio:** I obtained my PhD in Experimental Psychology, Linguistics, and Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, where I also worked for several years as a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Psychology. As an assistant professor, I recently moved to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan. My research focuses on social-cognitive development and how early nurturing experiences influence infants' and children's behavior. More specifically, I am investigating the regulatory effect of maternal affective touch on infants' attentional abilities and socio-emotional processes. To explore these topics, I use a multilevel approach, including behavioral assessments (e.g., looking times, eye gaze), measures of brain activity (e.g., electroencephalogram, EEG) as well as other physiological measures (electromyography, skin conductance, and heart rate).

**Reading recommendations:**

Carozza, S., & Leong, V. (2021). The role of affectionate caregiver touch in early neurodevelopment and parent–infant interactional synchrony. *Frontiers in neuroscience, 14*, 613378.

Botero, M., Langley, H. A., & Venta, A. (2020). The untenable omission of touch in maternal sensitivity and attachment research. *Infant and Child Development, 29*(2), e2159.

**Nina Bruinhof, Msc** <https://dpblab.org/nina-bruinhof/>

**Title:** The role of early caregiving behavior on infant development from a psychobiological view.

**Abstract:** The quality of parental caregiving is of great importance for children's psychobiological development. For example, children with parents displaying lower levels of caregiving behavior quality show worse physical health, altered hormonal functioning, and lower levels of later cognition. In this talk, I will focus on predictors and effects of parental caregiving behavior quality. I will discuss the role of parental mental health on caregiving behavior and the underlying neurobiological mechanisms of variation in caregiving behavior. Moreover, I will present different ways to measure the construct and possibilities for experimental and intervention studies. Lastly, I will focus on the infant and how differences in caregiving behavior and attachment play a role in both the children's psychological and biological development. Collectively, I aim to use this research to get a better understanding of the biological and psychological aspects of the parent-infant interaction.

**Short bio:** PhD student at the Radboud University Medical Center and Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior. Part of the Developmental Psychobiology Lab. Website links: <https://dpblab.org/nina-bruinhof/> and research gate <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nina-Bruinhof>

**Reading recommendations:**

- Bos, P. A. (2017). The endocrinology of human caregiving and its intergenerational transmission. *Development and Psychopathology*, 29(3), 971-999. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579416000973>
- Beijers, R., Breugelmans, S., Brett, B., Willemsen, Y., Bos, P., & de Weerth, C. (2022). Cortisol and testosterone concentrations during the prenatal and postpartum period forecast later caregiving quality in mothers and fathers. *Hormones and Behavior*, 142, 105177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yhbeh.2022.105177>
- Edwards, R. C., & Hans, S. L. (2016). Prenatal depressive symptoms and toddler behavior problems: the role of maternal sensitivity and child sex. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 47, 696-707.

**Prof. Dr. Paula Sterkenburg**

<https://research.vu.nl/en/persons/paula-sterkenburg>

**Title:** The role of attachment in the care of persons with a visual and intellectual disability

**Abstract:** After introducing the relationship between stress and attachment, the importance of building an attachment relationship will be explained. The risk factors that can play a role in building a secure attachment relationship with children with disabilities will be discussed. Recent developments regarding diagnostics of disorders of attachment will be presented. Assessment and interventions will be discussed based on scientific research and practical experience in care for children and adolescents with visual and intellectual disability.

**Short bio:** Prof. Dr. Paula Sterkenburg has a chair by special appointment at the Department of Clinical Child and Family Studies of the Faculty of Behavioral and Movement Sciences and the Amsterdam Public Health (APH) research center of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, in The Netherlands on ‘Persons with a visual or visual-and-intellectual disability, social relations, and ICT’. She is a licensed psychologist/therapist and works at the Bartiméus Department of Psychotherapy in Doorn. The theme of her PhD study was ‘Integrative Therapy for Attachment and Behavior’. She has a broad spectrum of experience, from RCT to single case studies. She is experienced in qualitative and quantitative research as well as mixed-method studies. Studies most often field studies examining the effect of newly developed adapted interventions focusing on attachment and social relations between parent/caregiver and child/client. Also, how ICT can support the development of social relations or the well-being of persons with ID and working on developing assessment instruments; she received many awards and is the author and co-author of books, articles, and other products such as serious games, apps, etc.

**Reading recommendations:**

Schuengel, C., de Schipper, J. C., Sterkenburg, P. S., & Kef, S. (2013). Attachment, intellectual disabilities and mental health: Research, assessment and intervention. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 26(1), 34-46.

Derks, S. D., Willems, A. M., Wouda, M., & Sterkenburg, P. S. (2024). Effectiveness of the mentalisation-based serious game ‘You & I’ for adults with mild to borderline intellectual disabilities: A randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 37(1), e13170.

**Ahmed Riaz Mohamed, Ma** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ahmed-Mohamed-234>

**Title:** Intervening from an attachment perspective to address challenging behavior in an adolescent with moderate intellectual disability: Learning from clinical practice.

**Abstract:** Children who have an intellectual disability (ID) or developmental delays may be at greater risk of insecure attachments. While the ID itself does not necessarily predispose the child to attachment insecurity, some of the developmental challenges that this cohort presents may make parenting a child with ID more challenging. Given the links between parenting—specifically sensitive and responsive caregiving—and attachment security, factors that may prevent and interfere with parenting can potentially interrupt the establishment of secure caregiver-child relationships. Therefore, working with primary caregivers to facilitate their caregiving is an important site of clinical intervention, particularly in the context of ID. Such intervention aims to enhance the quality of the relationship between primary caregivers and their child with ID to ultimately enhance attachments and, hence, the socioemotional development and well-being of children with ID. This lecture will present clinical case material, in detail, of a dyadic attachment intervention with a teenager with moderate ID and challenging behavior. In doing so, the lecture hopes to demonstrate the clinical utility and value of intervening from an attachment perspective with primary caregivers of children with ID to strengthen caregiving as an avenue towards promoting healthier caregiver-child relationships and, by extension, more adaptive socioemotional development in children with ID.

**Short bio:** Ahmed Riaz Mohamed is a lecturer and clinical psychologist from South Africa. He has worked in the field of intellectual disabilities within the public mental health services in SA, providing assessment and psychotherapeutic services to adults and children (and their caregivers) with ID. He has published academic work in the field of attachment-based interventions in the context of ID in both the *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* and the *Infant Mental Health Journal* and is completing his PhD at the VU Amsterdam.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Mohamed, A. R., Sterkenburg, P., van Rensburg, E., & Schuengel, C. (2023). Adapting Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up for infants and young children with intellectual disabilities and developmental delays in South Africa: Reflections and recommendations from local stakeholders. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 44(1), 54-75.
- Mohamed, A. R., Sterkenburg, P., Yeatman, J. G., van Rensburg, E., & Schuengel, C. (2022). Using Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up with young children with developmental delays: A multiple-baseline trial of attachment, sensitivity, and cortisol. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 17446295221104614.

**Dr. Thomas Bergman** <https://www.keh-berlin.de/kontakt/detail/thomas-bergmann>

**Title:** AQR-Short: Assessing the social-emotional state and the fidelity of music-based interventions supporting people on a low level of functioning

**Abstract:** Early parent-child interaction is characterized by patterns of timing, vocal timbre, dynamics, and melodic gesture. Speaking and moving in musical dance-like ways is the essential foundation for all forms of communication, just as it is for parenting, good teaching, creative work in the arts and therapy. Thus, musical-bodily interventions are very suitable for supporting adolescents and adults at a preverbal stage of emotional development.

The Instrument for Assessing the Quality of Relationship (AQR) was developed to ensure treatment fidelity by assessing the client's level of development on the one hand and the therapist's interventions on the other. A user-friendly, psychometrically revised short version is currently being prepared.

This workshop introduces the concept of communicative musicality and provides insight into the structure and use of the AQR-Short. Based on the scoring of video sequences reflecting therapeutic practice, participants will be invited to actively contribute to verifying and validating an assessment method in the field of attachment.

**Short bio:** Thomas Bergmann is a certified music therapist with a Ph.D. in psychology and is head of the therapy department of the Treatment Center for Mental Health in Developmental Disabilities at KEH, Berlin. Next to his clinical work, he is a supervisor in his own practice. His research focus is on creative arts therapy, autism spectrum disorder, social-emotional development, and assessment, as reflected in numerous international publications.

**Reading recommendation:**

Bergmann, T., Heinrich, M., Ziegler, M., Dziobek, I., Diefenbacher, A., & Sappok, T. (2019). Developing a diagnostic algorithm for the Music-Based Scale for Autism Diagnostics (MUSAD) assessing adults with intellectual disability. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 49, 3732-3752.

**Dr. Silke Reimer** <https://www.udk-berlin.de/studium/musiktherapie-master-of-arts/studium-musiktherapie/lehrende-musiktherapie/dr-silke-reimer/>

**Title:** A developmental psychological approach to people with severe multiple disabilities in music therapy

**Abstract:** Due to sensory, motor, and socio-emotional conditions, it might be difficult for people with severe multiple disabilities to get into contact with other people. In music therapy, they may neither play instruments nor react to the music of the therapist. Observations in developmental psychology show that a balanced emotional state is the basis of attentiveness, exploratory behavior, social interaction, and any positive development. Music therapy based on developmental psychological concepts aims at activating body awareness, regulating psychomotor arousal, and fostering the client's own means of expression. This often leads the person with severe multiple disabilities to make contact with oneself and subsequently contact with the environment and fellow human beings.

In this workshop a developmental psychological approach will be presented as a theoretical base for interventions meeting the client's needs. With the aid of short video clips the participants will learn to assess behavior and the affective state from a developmental point of view. Finally, appropriate music-based interventions are shown, allowing to get into contact with these highly vulnerable persons.

**Short bio:** Silke Reimer, Ph.D., is a certified music therapist and has been working with adults with severe multiple disabilities since 1999 and with children on the autistic spectrum. She is a lecturer at the University of the Arts in Berlin. The main focus of her work and her research interests are music therapy based on developmental psychology and affect regulation. She is co-author of the music therapy „Assessment of the Quality of Relationship“ (AQR) and giving workshops aiming to promote treatment fidelity.

**Reading recommendation:**

Schumacher, Calvet, Reimer (2016): The AQR Tool - Assessment of the quality of relationship. Wiesbaden: Reichert-Verlag.



**Dr. Sien Vandesande** <https://www.kuleuven.be/wieiswie/nl/person/00111171>

**Title:** Parent-child attachment in children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities: A different story?

**Abstract:** Developing consolidated, secure attachment relationships with primary caregivers yields great benefits for a person's social-emotional growth. Especially among persons with severe or profound intellectual disabilities (SPID), who are more likely to acquire mental health problems compared to the general population, the importance of attachment figures is significant. However, it is often challenging for caregivers to develop attachment relationships with persons with these complex and extensive support needs. Both risk factors on the side of the person with SPID (e.g., limited expressive communication) and the caregiver's side play a role (e.g., difficulties processing the diagnosis, difficulties interpreting the person's idiosyncratic signals). The knowledge on attachment in persons with SPID has long lagged but is increasingly getting more research attention. Also, in clinical practice, the attachment framework is becoming more prominent to look at, for instance, behavioral problems in persons with SPID. Dr. Sien Vandesande (KU Leuven, Belgium) will briefly overview the existing research base on caregiving and attachment in persons with SPID. She will discuss and illustrate her research on parent-child attachment in children with SPID, covering different methodologies (a.o. observation, physiology, interviews). At the end of the lecture, we aim to answer the question partially: Is parent-child attachment among children with SPID a different story?

**Short bio:** Sien Vandesande is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven's Parenting and Special Education research unit and is affiliated to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and academic workplace Viveon as a visiting research fellow. She holds a Doctoral degree (November 2021) in Educational Sciences. Her main research interests are co-regulating during stress, shared caregiving, and attachment in children with severe or profound intellectual (or multiple) disabilities.

**Reading recommendations:**

- Vandesande, S., Bosmans, G., Sterkenburg, P., Schuengel, C., Van Den Noortgate, W., & Maes, B. (2020). Comfort provided by parents versus strangers after eliciting stress in children with severe or profound intellectual disabilities: does it make a difference?. *Attachment & human development*, 22(4), 425-447.
- Vandesande, S., Bosmans, G., Schuengel, C., & Maes, B. (2019). Young children with significant developmental delay differentiate home observed attachment behaviour

towards their parents. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 32(1), 106-120.

Vandesande, S., Bosmans, G., & Maes, B. (2019). Can I be your safe haven and secure base? A parental perspective on parent-child attachment in young children with a severe or profound intellectual disability. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 93, 103452

## **Program Lab visit summer school**

**26 July 2024 9:30 to 12:15 - 13:00 H (Lunch included)**

At: Ons Tweede Thuis

Adres: Veteranenlaan 3, 5 7, 1183 DL Amstelveen

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 9:30 - 9:45    | Welcome by Dieuwke Kluvers (Healthcare psychologist OTT)  |
| 9:45 - 10:00   | Information about the Academic Lab 'Social Relations and ICT' by Paula Sterkenburg (Professor at the VU)  |
| 10:00 -10:20   | Project: What are the needs of parents? A project focusing of Ego documents by Saskia van der Weck (Developmental psychologist and parent of a son with ID) |
| 10:30 -10:40   | Break   |
| 10:40<br>11:00 | - The co-development of the Serious game 'You & I' (co-researchers from the Lab will present the game and development)                                      |
| 11:00 -12:15   | The Sheltered Workplace of OTT by Fibi (our guide from the Sheltered Workplace of OTT)  |
| 12:15          | Lunch   |

## **Program visit summer school**

**01 August 2024**

At Bartiméus, Oude Arnhemse Bovenweg 3, 3941 XM Doorn




Location: Gezondheidscentrum Bartiméus, conference room 1.42

09.30- 10.15 Hokke)	Coffee/tea and welcome (Paula Sterkenburg/ Hannelies
10.15- 10.30	Walking to the Fablab
10.30- 11.30	An introduction to the Fablab
11.30- 12.00	Visit a home for people with multiple disabilities
12.00- 12.15	Experience with white canes and simulation glasses
12.15- 12.30	Visiting the daily activity center the garden
12.30- 13.30	Lunch at the 'moestuin'
13.30 with	Visit 'het Ogenblikje' (shop with products made by people visual and intellectual disabilities)

Address Bartiméus Doorn:

Gezondheidscentrum (health care center, nr.17 on the map below)  
 Oude Arnhemse Bovenweg 3  
 3941 XM Doorn



-  Bus stop for bus 56 (from trainstation Driebergen/Zeist towards Wijk bij Duurstede). Get off at bus stop 'Bartiméus'.
-  Entrance to the health care center (Gezondheidscentrum)
-  Parking

**By train:** From Utrecht central station you take the train to Driebergen-Zeist. At Driebergen-Zeist you take bus 56 in the direction of Wijk bij Duurstede and you get off at bus stop "Bartiméus".

It is possible that the summer timetable will start in July, but you can check this carefully at: [9292.nl/en](https://9292.nl/en) - [Travel planner & e-tickets train, bus, metro, tram & boat](https://9292.nl/en)

**By car**, you enter the area of Bartiméus Doorn via the black arrow, and you exit the site via the orange arrow.

From Amsterdam/Utrecht/Arnhem A12

At the A12, take exit 20 Driebergen-Zeist. Then continue towards Driebergen (N225). Then turn left at the 1st traffic light towards Austerlitz (Loolaan). At the roundabout 2nd exit (Arnhemse Bovenweg). Keep following this road. After about 3 kilometers you will find Bartiméus on your right.

